

Governor Proclaims Statewide Drought in California and State of Emergency in Central Valley

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This spring Nature once again withheld some of the life-blood of this state: water—both as rain and snow. As a result, Governor Schwarzenegger [proclaimed a statewide drought](#) this month following two consecutive years of below-average rainfall, very low snowmelt runoff and the largest court-ordered water transfer restrictions in state history. Following that, he has now issued a [state of emergency proclamation](#) for nine Central Valley counties (Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern) due to the severe water shortages faced by farmers and ranchers.

The Governor's prompt actions on behalf of agriculture may help head off the future commodity price increases and job losses that could result from reduced crop yields or outright failures. Factored into his decisions were the possible outcomes that could result from additional, unexpected cuts recently made by federal water officials to [San Joaquin Valley farmers](#) in the middle of this growing season.

As the region's \$20 billion a year economic engine, protecting the agricultural industry in the Central Valley helps safeguard the economy, consumer pocketbooks and a way of life for millions in this state.

"I think we are bound to, and by, nature. We may want to deny this connection and try to believe we control the external world, but every time there's a snowstorm or drought, we know our fate is tied to the world around us." — Alice Hoffman

The Governor's proclamation directs the [Department of Water Resources](#) to work with the [U.S. Bureau of Reclamation](#) to deliver more water now through the [State Water Project](#) when it's needed most. It also orders the Department of Water Resources to transfer groundwater through the California Aqueduct to benefit farmers in the affected counties and the [State Water Resources Control Board](#) to review water transfers as quickly as possible.

Governor Schwarzenegger also stated, "Today we are taking aggressive action to address an immediate crisis, but a comprehensive solution is the only answer to addressing our drought situation in the long term." This drought points to the need for longer-term strategies to deal with both the expected and unexpected, with challenges that can be local and global in nature, from climate change to invasive species to trade and a host of other issues. We must be prepared to deal with them if we are to ensure the continuing health and sustainability of agriculture in this state and in this century.

In light of the current drought conditions and the continuing challenges from invasive pests facing California ranchers and farmers, I am visiting D.C. this week to pursue possible public assistance and strategies for dealing with and anticipating the consequences of these issues.

I want to remind you that the [California Agricultural Vision](#) initiative is now underway and there are four more opportunities for you to participate in a listening session and share your ideas with us: July 1 in San Luis Obispo, July 2 in Tulare, July 7 in Oxnard and July 8 in Escondido. Visit the [CDFA homepage](#) for information on this and other agricultural topics and issues, such as food safety.

And for those who want to learn more and share comments about the many Delta projects and programs underway that focus on the sustainable management of that ecosystem and resource, I encourage you to attend one of the [Delta town hall meetings](#) being held this month in Suisun City, Walnut Grove and Stockton, from June 23-25.

As always, thank you for your support of California agriculture.

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